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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 63 of the First Extraordinary Session
By McDonald

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the American Legion
upon the occasion of its 80th birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause in their deliberations to pay tribute to those exemplary organizations, and their individual members, who have given unselfishly of themselves, their time, and their talents to perpetuate the public good; and

WHEREAS, the American Legion is most assuredly one such extraordinary organization deserving of praise and commendation; and

WHEREAS, this year, the American Legion will celebrate, with a sense of pride and accomplishment, 80 years of commendable service to U.S. veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, from March 15-17, 1919, some members of the famous American Expeditionary Force, also known as “the Doughboys”, gathered in Paris to discuss ways to serve their country on the homefront; at those meetings, the American Legion was established to take care of those valiant men and women who have “borne the battle”; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires are proud of their organization and its constant vigilance to uphold the core values of our nation—freedom, justice, respect, and equality; and

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WHEREAS, Legion members have remained true to their founders' vision of a long-standing commitment to America's veterans, a vision that is consistent with the first rule of battle, "We will not fail those with whom we serve"; and

WHEREAS, on September 16, 1919, the U.S. Congress chartered The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, since its inaugural year in 1919, the American Legion has grown to more than 3 million members; the American Legion is comprised of veterans from every war and military action since World War I, making it the largest wartime veterans group in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the American Legion is not only the largest, but also the most active veterans' organization; and

WHEREAS, during the past 80 years, the American Legion has stalwartly supported various public service groups, and written, proposed, and lobbied legislation to benefit veterans and support our forefathers' vision for this country; and

WHEREAS, because of the American Legion's persuasive argument that veterans are an important segment of society and deserve representation in the highest councils of government, the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is devoted solely to veterans' issues, was established in 1921 as the U.S. Veterans Bureau and was eventually elevated to cabinet-level status in 1989; and

WHEREAS, in 1943, the Legion shepherded to passage its single greatest legislative achievement, the "GI Bill of Rights"; the bill comprehensively outlined veterans' issues and rights and was signed into law in 1944 by President Franklin Roosevelt; and

WHEREAS, as the veterans' best friend, the American Legion has recently proposed a new GI Bill; this comprehensive legislation is designed to increase education and training

benefits for today's veterans that are comparable to the benefits their parents and grandparents received for military service; and

WHEREAS, the law-abiding members of the Legion seek to accomplish their goals by working within the legal system they have fought to protect, as evidenced by the establishment of the U.S. Court of Veteran Appeals, the purpose of which is to improve judicial procedures for veterans' claims; and

WHEREAS, realizing the need to provide adequate health care for veterans after they have completed their tour of duty, the American Legion has also formulated comprehensive proposals to improve the VA Health Care System and to reform its unfair and complicated eligibility rules; and

WHEREAS, ever vigilante in their efforts to preserve the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice while defending their country, the American Legion was the largest, single contributor to the Vietnam War Memorial and has been instrumental in the creation of other war memorials, including the Korean War Memorial and the future World War II Memorial; and

WHEREAS, second to none in patriotism, the American Legion honors all things that the blood of our patriots have sanctified, and is especially devoted to protecting the American flag from acts of physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, the Legion's "fight for the flag" can be traced back to 1923, when the first "Flag Code" was drafted during a conference; the Legion continues to be the staunchest advocate for the passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, the American Legion created a coalition of organizations and individual citizens, known as the Citizens' Flag Alliance, to work for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, since its founding, the American Legion has stood for the values enshrined in the Constitution and symbolized by the red, white, and blue; and

WHEREAS, the Legion tirelessly strives to improve the quality of life in our nation through committed volunteerism; its members have donated more blood than any other organization and have volunteered over 2.7 million hours of their time to worthwhile civic activities; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires have benevolently given millions of dollars to children and youth programs, via the Legion's long-standing sponsorship of American Legion Baseball, Boys State and Boys Nation, and the Boy Scouts, and have generously donated more than \$9 million to other charitable organizations, including the United Way and the Red Cross; and

WHEREAS, the American Heart Association and the National Association for Mental Health were both started by the American Legion; millions of Americans owe their lives to these two organizations that have made tremendous progress in the areas of heart disease and mental illness, respectively; and

WHEREAS, through its Family Support Network, the American Legion extends its services to help the families of war veterans by acting as a support group for family members during military deployment, assisting returning veterans with civilian employment placement, and extending scholarships to the descendants of U.S. veterans; and

WHEREAS, today, the members of the American Legion continue to steadfastly defend their nation in times of war, lobby for a strong national defense, and stalwartly work to preserve the fabric of the nation; and

WHEREAS, the American Legion is truly a great organization and has been a catalyst for positive change throughout our nation's history; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those organizations that are commemorating significant milestones in their historic existence; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and congratulate the American Legion and its members upon the celebration of the Legion's 80th birthday, commend their meritorious service to the veterans of the United States, and wish them all the best in future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.